

# Writing Terms

The following are terms for techniques that writers use to add imagery and life to their writing.

**Snapshot** – In this technique a writer creates a still picture that plants a clear image in readers’ minds.

From *Chicken Soup for the Soul* – “The Man in the Green Pickup”:

“I didn’t know the man. I didn’t even know his name. But he changed my life as a writer, and over the years I often felt as though I sat with him in his green Forest Service pickup every day at noon. Each day, he ate a baloney-and-processed-cheese sandwich on white bread with mayo. After he took his last bite, he brushed the crumbs off his lap and swiped the mayo from the corners of his mouth. He poured a plastic cup of instant coffee from his Stanley thermos and set the cup on the dash.”

**Thought shot** – This technique is used when the narrator or character reveals his or her thoughts. It is sometimes set apart from the narration by use of italics or parentheses.

From *Chicken Soup for the Soul* – “The Secret Life of a Teenage Author”:

“For the first time in my life I found something I was both good at and enjoyed doing—not like studying for the SATs (which I’d started in seventh grade, at my parents’ insistence), or playing piano for six hours.”

**Dialogue** – By writing the actual conversation occurring in a scene, the writer can activate the “audio” in the scene for readers.

From *Jackie’s Nine: Jackie Robinson’s Values to Live By* – “The Colonel from ‘Old Kaintuck’” (Pee Wee Reese is asked how he feels about Jackie Robinson joining the team):

“What position did you say this guy played?” “Shortstop.” “Well, that’s the old Reese luck for you. There’re nine positions and this guy has to play shortstop.”

**Slo-mo** – Like watching the frame-by-frame replay of a sporting event, writing a scene in slow motion allows readers to envision every single action in the event and feel engaged.

From *Jackie’s Nine: Jackie Robinson’s Values to Live By* – “Together Now, Push!”:

“. . . Engines whining, tires spinning, and sliding . . . Foot by foot, the engine screaming, the men straining, the car moves forward.”

**Figurative language** – Poetic devices—especially similes, metaphors, and personification—can go a long way toward creating great imagery.

From *Walking on the Boundaries of Change* – “A Real Case”:

“Today I’m worthless / a leftover bath, / a wad of second-hand gum. / I belong in a twist-tied bag / with the rest of the toys that won’t run.”